



# Information Series

## Enjoying Parks & Trails With Your Dog

**A**ny park or trail visit is enhanced by the companionship of your dog. A park or trail is a great place to relax, see nature's beauty and enjoy the benefits of outdoor exercise. Because of their beauty and utility, parks and trails are used by all kinds of people in a variety of ways. For parks and trails to remain a pleasant community experience, everyone must do their part to use them responsibly.

In some towns, special "dog parks" have been established to provide a place for owners let their dogs run and play off leash. These dog parks exist in areas that have leash laws which never allow dogs to be off leash when they are off their owner's property.

In Thurston County, we do not currently have any "dog parks." Here, all parks and trails require that dogs must, at all times, remain on a leash.

Large areas in the county have no leash laws and dogs can be loose with or without human supervision, as long as they are not causing problems. In pet control zones, well-mannered and obedient dogs (the only kind that should EVER be off-leash) may be off-leash if under the DIRECT verbal command of their owner. **Again, parks and trails require leashes at all times.**

For the dog owner, this means ample spaces and places exist for you and your pet to enjoy the outdoors, but your dog must be leashed when in a park or on a trail.



## RESPECTING OTHER'S RIGHTS

It is difficult for someone who loves dogs to understand that there are people who, through no fault of their own, may have a strong fear or dislike of dogs. Fear of dogs is the ninth most common fear for humans. Some people, especially those who have been bitten by a dog as a small child, may have an actual phobia of dogs. Some people may like dogs, but may be leery of being approached by an unfamiliar dog. These people have a right to enjoy parks and trails also. When your friendly dog runs head long at park and trail visitors, you see a funny or harmless behavior; others may be alarmed and traumatized. By keeping your pet leashed in public parks and on trails, you help make the experience pleasant for everyone.



## WHY "GOOD" DOGS BITE

Normal dog behavior includes threat displays, predatory behavior, dominance and territorial aggression. A dog is not "bad" because he engages in normal dog behavior, but an owner who allows the dog to enter into situations where he can frighten or harm others is putting people and the pet at risk. A dog can only be as dangerous as the owner allows it to be.

Chasing and sometimes biting at quick-moving objects, such as cyclists or joggers, is very normal dog behavior and can easily be controlled by proper leash use. In a crowded, busy place like a park or on a trail, a dog has plenty of opportunities to be tempted into "prey" or predatory behavior such as chasing or nipping.



Another reason for biting includes inappropriate protectiveness—for instance, a person running toward a dog's owner in order to catch a frisbee may have his actions interpreted as threatening by a protective dog. Many bites in Thurston County occur when children, who are unable to control a dog, are holding the leash.



Please respect all park and trail users and obey the leash laws. If you want to let your dog run, find a suitable site in a non-park area for this activity.

### **WHAT TO DO WHEN YOU ARE BOTHERED BY LOOSE DOGS IN THE PARK**

Unfortunately, loose dogs are a fact of life in our community. If you are approached by a loose dog in a park or on a trail, consider the following information:

**IF YOU ARE A JOGGER/SKATER**, stop where you are. Remain calm and face the dog. Give the dog firm, calm commands such as “sit” or “go home.” If the dog’s owner is present, call their attention to their dog and ask them to put the dog on a leash. If the dog acts aggressively, get something (a water bottle, sweater, purse, umbrella or walking stick) between you and the dog. Offer this object to the dog if it appears it is going to bite.

**IF YOU ARE ON A BIKE**, stop cycling. Get off your bike and put it between you and the dog. If the dog’s owner is present, call their attention to their dog and ask them to leash it. If no owner is present, leave the area slowly, keeping the bike between you and the dog.



**IF YOU ARE WALKING YOUR DOG**, and a dog approaches and you are concerned about a possible dog fight, pick up your dog if it is small enough. If you have a

larger dog, grasp it by the collar and hold it close to your side. Point your finger at the approaching dog and tell it firmly to “sit” or “go home.” If the dog’s owner is present, call their attention to their dog and ask them to leash it.

**IF YOU ARE WITH A SMALL CHILD**, and are approached by an unfamiliar dog, it is best to pick up your child. Older children should be cautioned to stop and remain still until the dog leaves or is controlled by the owner.

### **DOG DETERRENTS**

There are several products available on the market which can help deter aggressive or nuisance dogs. Most are a weak solution of pepper spray, while some use citronella—both cause temporary discomfort to the dog by affecting the eyes, nose and throat. Some people carry devices which emit loud or ultrasonic sound—these are effective with some dogs. No product works on all dogs at all times.

### **REPORTING A DOG INCIDENT**

If you are menaced or annoyed by loose dogs in a park or on a trail, you need to report it to park or trail personnel.

If it is a serious incident resulting in injury to a human or another animal, it should be reported to Animal Services. Animal Services will need a description of the dog and any owner information, such as their name, or a car license plate number.

Call Animal Services at (360) 352-2510 to report serious incidents.

### **Parks’ Phone Numbers:**

Olympia.....753-8380  
Lacey .....491-0857  
Tumwater .....754-4160  
Thurston County .....786-5595